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account. This fact gives it a seriousness which is almost sublime. To Goethe, nothing was vague, nothing empty, nothing trivial, — we had almost said, nothing false. Was there ever a book so dispassionate, or, as some persons prefer to call it, cold-blooded? In reading it, we learn the meaning of the traditional phrase about the author's calmness. This calmness seems nearly identical with the extraordinary activity of his mind, as they must both indeed have been the result of a deep sense of intellectual power. It is hard to say which is the truer, that his mind is without haste or without rest. In the pages before us there is not a ray of humor, and hardly a flash of wit; or if they exist, they are lost in the luminous atmosphere of justice which fills the book. These things imply some degree of passion; and Goethe's plan was *non flere, non indignari, sed intelligere*.

We do not know that in what we have said there is much to lead those who are strangers to this work to apply themselves to the perusal of it. We are well aware that our remarks are lamentably disproportionate to the importance of our subject. To attempt to throw a general light upon it in the limits here prescribed would be like striking a match to show off the *Transfiguration*. We would therefore explicitly recommend its perusal to all such persons, especially young persons, as feel that it behooves them to attach a meaning to life. Even if it settles nothing in their minds, it will be a most valuable experience to have read it. It is worth reading, if only to differ with it. If it is a priceless book to love, it is almost as important a one to hate; and whether there is more in it of truth or of error, it is at all events *great*. Is not this by itself sufficient? *Wilhelm Meister* may not have much else that other books have, but it has this, that it is the product of a great mind. There are scores of good books written every day; but this one is a specimen of the grand manner.

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19. — *Annals of the American Pulpit, or Commemorative Notices of Distinguished American Clergymen of various Denominations, from the early Settlement of the Country to the Close of the Year Eighteen Hundred and Fifty-five. With Historical Introductions.* By WILLIAM B. SPRAGUE, D.D. Volume VIII. *Unitarian Congregational.* New York: Robert Carter and Brothers. 1865. 8vo. pp. 578.

DOCTOR SPRAGUE'S chief design in the work of which the last published volume now lies before us was to introduce the several denominations of American Christians to one another's just appreciation and cordial esteem. He has effected this so naturally, genially, and felici-

tously, that, while the reader marvels that he never knew before what wise and good men there were in other folds than his own, he fails to trace the loving skill which has converted the dry facts of our ecclesiastical history into arguments for tolerance, charity, and good-fellowship. Bringing in his labor of love a mind admirably fitted for the manipulation of such materials as he sought, our author has made of them by far the most valuable compend of ecclesiastical biography and personal history that has ever appeared in this country, — a work which for breadth of plan and thoroughness of execution has few, if any, rivals in the department to which it belongs.

Dr. Sprague's eight massive volumes condense the patient toil of more than twenty years, the results of a correspondence with thousands of persons in hundreds of places, and the record of what their compiler has seen and heard in his own professional intercourse for nearly half a century. The method adopted in them is one by which the truth with regard to each of the persons commemorated is most likely to have its fair representation. Where there are no accessible living authorities concerning the subject of one of his biographies, Dr. Sprague writes the memoir himself, always referring in a foot-note to his sources of information. In most of the other cases a brief memoir thus compiled forms the first and an essential part of the sketch, which is completed by letters from such persons as are best qualified to bear testimony to the events, incidents, or local traditions connected with the life of the individual treated of. It will be readily seen that this mode needs to be carefully guarded against an excess of eulogy. If intimate friends or warm admirers were encouraged to furnish biographical letters *ad libitum*, the book would be little better than a series of amplified epitaphs. But while Dr. Sprague has sought notices almost always from friendly hands, they are very seldom derived from near kinsmen, or even from coeval intimates. His aim has been as far as possible to place as biographers before the public men of known reputation for discernment and integrity, — men whose names were a sufficient guaranty for the accuracy and impartiality of their narratives. With reference to his more distinguished subjects, he never contents himself with the testimony of a single witness, but adduces several who can present the character in different aspects, and not unfrequently members of different religious sects.

Of the eight volumes the one just issued seems to us the most full of various interest. There are many reasons for this. In the two or three generations preceding our own, there can be no question that the majority of the more gifted and influential Massachusetts clergymen were to a greater or less degree heretical as tried by the established

Calvinistic standards. True, a large proportion of these liberal divines, if living now, would not take their place among the Unitarians. Many of them would find themselves embraced within the looser girth of a less stringent orthodoxy; while many of them would rather associate themselves with the closest adherents of the Westminster creed, than with the rationalistic and naturalistic professors of Unitarianism. And from divines of this class, who failed of entire conformity with the popular faith only because of their rigid integrity of conscience, the volume includes men of all shades of belief down to the Scriptural humanitarianism of these recent times, — without embracing, however, any subjects of the now existing school typified by Theodore Parker, which in 1855 was too young to have a necrology. There was thus a broader range and a wider diversity of theological speculation to be covered by this volume than by any of the preceding seven, with the five powerful denominations to which they are devoted. Then, too, the principal pulpits in Massachusetts, toward the close of the last and for the first quarter of the present century, were occupied almost wholly by ministers of the more liberal party, and nowhere has the minister ever been more emphatically the parson (*persona*), person, or representative man of his parish, than in these very communities, during the period specified, — so that the lives of the clergy comprise important chapters of the local history which they took the lead in making. For similar reasons Dr. Sprague has in this part of his work a very large proportion of collaborators who have borne distinguished names and filled prominent places in their respective communities.

This volume also contains sketches of several men whose fame belongs by no means to their denomination, but to the republic of letters or of science, and of many others who were as extensively known, revered, and beloved beyond the pale of their own sect as within it. At the same time, we cannot find on the list a name that ought to have been omitted, or in the volume a biography which is not worth reading; while many of the sketches are of special interest, sometimes from the quaint character of the subject, sometimes from the skilful painting of the writer.

We feel, too, on the perusal of this book, that it has brought us into intimate communion with many eminently good men, whose lives were a perpetual blessing to those among whom their lot was cast, and who have left enduring and precious fruits and memories of their labor, example, and influence.

We cannot too highly praise Dr. Sprague's integrity and fairness. His position as a Presbyterian of the strictest school is perfectly well known, nor is he in a single instance oblivious of it. He probably has

as little love of Unitarianism as any of his Calvinistic brethren. Yet in not so much as a word has he permitted sectarian sympathy to affect his biographic impartiality. He is not only perfectly fair, but lavishly generous. No Unitarian will doubt that he has done the denomination full justice; the richness of the volume might lead hostile readers to suppose that he had done it more than justice. Certainly no member of the denomination would have expected from a brother of the same faith a work more entirely free from undue bias and prejudice. In fine, with regard to this, as well as with reference to the preceding volumes, the unanimous verdict is, "There lives no other man who could have done this work so well."

20. — *Reason in Religion.* By FREDERICK HENRY HEDGE. Boston: Walker, Fuller, & Co. 1865. 16mo. pp. 458.

"No more confidential gift can man offer to man, than what he has talked to himself in the innermost chamber of his soul," — such is the motto of this book, taken from Schleiermacher, which we translate as an expression of the spirit in which Dr. Hedge offers his volume to the reader.

The work appears to be in great part — the First Book at least — made up of the sermons of its accomplished author. This fact does not diminish the value of its contents or its construction; for Dr. Hedge's sermons are the studies in philosophy and piety of a mind at once sensible, poetical, and spiritual, alike free and reverent, manly and godly.

Here is a Body of Divinity with the soul of humanity in it, — not like one of those so-called Bodies of Divinity in old time, out of which a meagre ghost of dogma squeaked and gibbered. Here a whole, live, manly man speaks without cant. Few books going over so much ground, and touching on so many of the vexed questions of sceptical speculation and sectarian controversy, will afford the thoughtful reader so much satisfaction, on the whole, as this.

Dr. Hedge's statements and arguments move right on to practical issues with simple directness. He recognizes and reveres the great mystery which to finite minds must ever hang around the infinite; but he sees the limit clearly, he grants no indulgence to mystification. He holds to the much misinterpreted and even misquoted saying of James Foster, that "where the mystery begins, religion ends." Indeed, it is remarkable, with the author's speculative propension and power, how resolutely he subordinates the speculative to the practical.